# Standing Firm: Spiritual Warfare Against Control in Church Leadership



Explore how to recognize and resist the spirit of control in church leadership, embracing Godly authority over fear and domination.





# Table of contents

<u>Introduction</u>	3
Day 1: Recognizing the Spirit of Control	4
Day 2: T Biblical Authority vs. Domination	10
Day 3: Resisting Fear-Based Decisions	16
Day 4: S Freedom in the Spirit	22
<u>Day 5: O Discernment Against Deception</u>	28
Day 6: Standing Firm in Prayer and the Word	34
Day 7: B Cultivating Community in Freedom and Love	40







# Introduction

Spiritual warfare is a reality for every believer, especially within the challenging contexts of church leadership. The spirit of control often manifests through domination, fear-based decisions, and unhealthy hierarchies that can stifle the freedom God intends for His people. This 7-day study is designed to equip believers to discern, resist, and overcome these forces with biblical wisdom and courage.

Leadership in the church is meant to serve and shepherd, not to dominate or intimidate. Fear and control can creep in subtly, causing division, discouragement, and spiritual bondage. This study will encourage you to stand firm in your God-given identity, resist fear-driven control, and support leadership that reflects Christ's humility and servant heart.

Each day, we'll explore Scripture that reveals God's heart for authority, freedom, and truth. You will discover practical steps to guard your heart and your church community from harmful control tactics, while embracing the peace and boldness that come from walking in the Spirit. Let this journey embolden you to fight not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces that seek to divide and control.

Remember, God calls us to freedom, love, and unity. As we navigate the challenges of spiritual warfare in leadership, may our hearts be rooted in His truth and empowered by His Spirit.







# Day 1: Recognizing the Spirit of Control









Day 1: Necognizing the Spirit of Control

#### Your Verse

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 - 'For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.'

# **Supporting Scriptures**

- Ephesians 6:12 'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against... the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil.'
- 1 John 4:18 'There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.'







Day 1: Necognizing the Spirit of Control

# Devotional: Seeing the Hidden Battle of Control

Understanding Spiritual Control begins with recognizing that the battle is not merely physical or external but deeply spiritual. Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians that our struggle is against strongholds—spiritual forces that seek to dominate, enslave, and instill fear. In many churches, control can look like fear-based leadership, hierarchical domination, or manipulative authority.

These strongholds can create divisions, distrust, and a stifling atmosphere where genuine freedom and worship are compromised. But the promise of Scripture is that our weapons are *divine power*, capable of demolishing even the most entrenched spiritual control.

Reflect on 1 John's truth that perfect love drives out fear. The spirit of control thrives on fear. When love replaces fear, control loses its power. This day, ask God to open your eyes to any fear-driven influences around or within you, so you can approach them with discernment and courage.







Day 1:  $\mathbb Q$  Recognizing the Spirit of Control

# Reflect and Apply

1.	In what ways have you seen fear used to control leadership or decisions?
2.	How does understanding the spiritual nature of this battle impact your view of church conflicts?
3.	What fears do you personally need to surrender to God's perfect love?







Day 1:  $\mathbb Q$  Recognizing the Spirit of Control

# **Journaling Prompts**

1.	Describe a time you witnessed fear-based control in a church setting.
2.	Write down any strongholds you sense need spiritual demolition in your life or church.
3.	List scriptures about love that help you combat fear.







Day 1: Necognizing the Spirit of Control

# Prayer for Today

**Father God,** I thank You that You have given us divine weapons to fight spiritual battles. Help me to see the spirit of control for what it is—a stronghold built on fear and domination. Fill my heart with Your perfect love, that I might walk free and bold in Your truth. Give me discernment to recognize unhealthy control and the courage to resist it according to Your Word. May Your Spirit guide my thoughts and actions today as I stand firm in Your peace. *In Jesus' name, Amen.*

















Day 2: T Biblical Authority vs. Domination

#### Your Verse

Matthew 20:25-28 - 'Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them... Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant."

# **Supporting Scriptures**

- 1 Peter 5:2-3 'Be shepherds of God's flock... not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.'
- Philippians 2:3-4 'Do nothing out of selfish ambition... but in humility consider others better than yourselves.'







Day 2: 1 Biblical Authority vs. Domination

#### Devotional: Embracing Servant Leadership Over Control

**Godly leadership** is rooted in servanthood, not domination. Jesus' teaching in Matthew directly confronts the temptation for leaders to control through pride or fear. He frames true authority as humble service to others.

When church leadership becomes about wielding power, it can foster fear and obedience without love, breeding spiritual bondage instead of freedom. Peter exhorts elders to lead by example, not by coercion or control.

Reflect on how Jesus inverted the world's idea of power. A leader's role is to serve, sacrifice, and prioritize the wellbeing of the flock over personal ambition. This counters the spirit of control, which seeks to elevate self and oppress others.

Is your heart aligned with Jesus' servant leadership? Pray for humility and a heart that seeks to build up rather than dominate.







Day 2: T Biblical Authority vs. Domination

# Reflect and Apply

1.	How does Jesus redefine greatness in leadership compared to worldly standards?
	Have you seen examples of control disguised as authority? How did that affect the community?
3.	What does servant leadership look like in your context?







Day 2: T Biblical Authority vs. Domination

# **Journaling Prompts**

1.	Write about a leader who embodies servant leadership and what you learned.
2.	Identify ways you might resist domination if you were in leadership.
3.	Pray for humility in leadership roles you currently hold or may hold.







Day 2: 1 Biblical Authority vs. Domination

# Prayer for Today

**Lord Jesus,** You taught us that true leadership is servant-hearted. Help me to reject any spirit of domination or fear-based control. Teach me to lead and follow with humility, always seeking to serve others as You served. Fill my heart with Your example so that I can reflect Your love and grace in every situation. Strengthen me to stand against any form of control that contradicts Your will. *Amen.* 🙌 😂

















#### Your Verse

Isaiah 41:10 – 'So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.'

# **Supporting Scriptures**

- 2 Timothy 1:7 'For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.'
- Psalm 27:1 'The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?'







# Devotional: Overcoming Fear in Church Decisions

**Fear is a powerful tool** often used to manipulate decisions, especially in leadership. When decisions are driven by fear—fear of losing control, criticism, or change—they often lead to harmful outcomes that suppress freedom and spiritual growth.

God's Word repeatedly commands us to cast out fear because He is with us. Isaiah's encouragement serves as a powerful reminder that fear should never dictate our choices. The Spirit God gives is one of power, love, and self-discipline, not timidity or control through intimidation.

In leadership and in our personal walk, we must root decisions in faith and trust in God instead of fear. This frees the body of Christ to thrive in an atmosphere of peace, courage, and truth.

Ask God to reveal areas where fear influences your decisions or the decisions of leaders around you, and pray for His liberating power.







# Reflect and Apply

1.	What fears commonly influence leadership decisions you've seen?
2.	How does trusting God's presence change your approach to challenges?
3.	Where can you personally exchange fear for faith in leadership or life?







# **Journaling Prompts**

	Write about an experience when fear-based decisions caused harm or stagnation.
	List fears that may influence your attitudes or decisions in church contexts.
3.	Pray inviting God's peace and courage to replace fear today.







# Prayer for Today

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your promise to never leave or forsake us. Help me to reject fear in all its forms and to lean fully on Your strength. Empower me with Your Spirit to make decisions rooted in love, power, and self-discipline rather than fear or pressure. May Your peace guard my heart and mind, and may Your Spirit guide our leaders to lead without fear, trusting fully in Your sovereignty. *In Jesus' strong name, Amen.* 1









# Day 4: W Freedom in the Spirit









Day 4: 😂 Freedom in the Spirit

#### Your Verse

Galatians 5:1 - 'It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.'

# **Supporting Scriptures**

- John 8:36 'So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.'
- Romans 8:15 'You received the Spirit of adoption... and you cry, "Abba, Father."'







Day 4: 🐯 Freedom in the Spirit

# Devotional: Living Unchained by Control

**True freedom** is found in the Spirit of God, not in external control or hierarchies that enforce domination. Paul's powerful command to stand firm in the freedom Christ has given us challenges any yoke of bondage—even when it masquerades as authority or tradition.

Church environments riddled with control can feel like slavery, restricting spiritual growth and authentic community. But God's Spirit reminds us that we are beloved children, adopted into His family with full access to His freedom and love.

Reflect on what it means to be 'free indeed.' This freedom is not license to sin but the liberty to live in truth, peace, and love, empowered to resist manipulation or domination.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you afresh today, breaking every chain of control and fear.







Day 4: 😂 Freedom in the Spirit

# Reflect and Apply

	How do you experience freedom in Christ despite oppressive environments?
2.	What yokes of control do you see in your church or community?
3.	How can the Spirit's adoption empower you to resist domination?







Day 4: 🐯 Freedom in the Spirit

# **Journaling Prompts**

1.	Describe what freedom in Christ means personally to you.
2.	Write a list of any 'old yokes' you need to release today.
3.	Pray for God to reveal and remove control that threatens freedom.







Day 4: 🐯 Freedom in the Spirit

# Prayer for Today

Spirit of the Living God, thank You for the freedom that Christ has purchased for me. Help me to stand firm in this freedom and reject any spirit or system that enslaves through control or fear. Fill me anew with Your love and power so that I can live confidently as Your child, embracing Your truth and grace. May Your freedom break every chain in my life and church community today. *Amen.* 💋 😭

















#### Your Verse

1 John 4:1 – 'Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.'

# **Supporting Scriptures**

- Hebrews 5:14 'Solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.'
- Proverbs 3:5-6 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.'







#### Devotional: Growing Spiritually Wise to Discern Control

**Discernment is vital** in spiritual warfare, especially when confronting the spirit of control which often comes disguised as concern, tradition, or authority. John's exhortation urges believers to test every spirit to distinguish truth from deception.

Control tactics may hide behind fear or manipulation, making it challenging to identify without mature spiritual insight. Hebrews encourages growth in maturity, which sharpens our ability to discern rightly.

True discernment requires trusting God wholly and seeking His guidance above personal understanding. It protects the church and individual believers from being led astray or oppressed.

Pray for increased sensitivity to the Spirit's leading today, that you may see clearly and act wisely.







# Reflect and Apply

	What are some signs that leadership or decisions might be influenced by a controlling spirit?
2.	How do you personally test spirits in confusing or challenging situations?
3.	What habits help you grow in spiritual maturity for discernment?







# **Journaling Prompts**

	List ways you've learned to recognize deception or manipulation spiritually.
2.	Write about a time discernment helped you avoid harm.
3.	Pray for God's wisdom and guidance in your spiritual journey.







# Prayer for Today

**Lord, my Guide and Teacher,** I ask for a discerning heart to test every spirit and see truth clearly. Help me to grow in spiritual maturity, understanding, and wisdom. May I not be swayed by fear or control wrapped in good intentions but stand firmly on Your Word. Lead me by Your Spirit so I can encourage healthy leadership and protect Your church from deception. *In Jesus' name, Amen.*  $\bigcirc$   $\bigcirc$   $\bigcirc$   $\bigcirc$ 







# Day 6: Standing Firm in Prayer and the Word









Day 6: XX Standing Firm in Prayer and the Word

#### Your Verse

Ephesians 6:13 – 'Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.'

# **Supporting Scriptures**

- Psalm 119:105 'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.'
- Philippians 4:6-7 'Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.'







Day 6: X Standing Firm in Prayer and the Word

# Devotional: Armor Up with Prayer and Scripture

**Spiritual warfare** requires intentionality through prayer and saturating ourselves with God's Word. Paul's call to put on the full armor of God reminds us to prepare for battle—not by human strength, but by divine power.

Standing firm means resisting control and fear through the shield of faith, the belt of truth, and the sword of the Spirit—God's Word. Prayer keeps us connected to God, strengthening our hearts and minds for the fight.

When dealing with controlling leadership, prayer sharpens discernment and releases God's peace amidst turmoil. Scripture guides us in clarity and courage to stand against domination without falling into anger or passivity.

Commit to daily prayer and Scripture reading as your frontline defense today.







Day 6: 🔀 Standing Firm in Prayer and the Word

# Reflect and Apply

1.	Which pieces of God's armor do you find easiest or hardest to put on?
2.	How has prayer helped you resist fear or control in your life?
3.	What verses sustain you when facing spiritual battles?







Day 6: 🔀 Standing Firm in Prayer and the Word

# **Journaling Prompts**

1.	Write a prayer asking God to equip and protect you spiritually.
2.	List Bible verses that remind you of God's strength and truth.
3.	Journal about a time Scripture and prayer helped you stand firm.







Day 6: 🔀 Standing Firm in Prayer and the Word

# Prayer for Today

God of Power and Peace, equip me today with Your full armor. Help me to stand firm against the spirit of control with the belt of truth tied tightly and the sword of Your Spirit in hand. Teach me to pray without ceasing, trusting You to lead and protect me. May Your Word light my path and strengthen my heart. Guard me in moments of fear and confusion. *In Jesus' mighty name, Amen.* 🂢 🗀 🙏















#### Your Verse

Colossians 3:12-14 - 'Therefore, as God's chosen people... clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.'

# **Supporting Scriptures**

- Romans 12:10 'Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.'
- John 13:34 'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.'







# Devotional: Building Church in Love, Not Control

**Freedom from control** is not simply an individual victory but a call to build healthy, loving community. Paul encourages believers to clothe themselves with virtues that foster unity and peace, standing in stark contrast to domination and fear.

A church free from the spirit of control is marked by compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and above all, love. These qualities heal wounds caused by fear-based leadership and invite everyone to participate as equals in Christ's body.

Today is an invitation to commit to cultivating such a community. Pray for grace to embody these virtues personally and for your church leadership to reflect servant-hearted love, creating an environment where everyone thrives in freedom.







# Reflect and Apply

How does love act as a binding force against division and control?
Which of the virtues listed do you find hardest to practice?
How can you contribute to building a church culture that resists domination?







# **Journaling Prompts**

1.	Identify ways your community embodies or lacks these virtues.
2.	Write a personal commitment to cultivate love and humility.
3.	Pray for church leaders to lead with compassion and servant hearts.







# Prayer for Today

**Dear Lord,** thank You for calling us to unity in love. Help me to clothe myself daily with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bind Your church together in perfect love that casts out fear and domination. May our leaders serve with Your heart, and may our community flourish in freedom and peace. Teach us to honor one another and walk as true family in Christ. *Amen.*







# Where God's Word Meets Your Daily Life

#### A Personal Invitation from HolyJot

We pray this Bible Study has blessed you and drawn you closer to the heart of God. If you enjoyed this study, we'd love for you to join our growing HolyJot community online.



- 100k+ Bible Study Plans on every topic of life
- Access studies anytime on your phone, tablet, or computer
- Studies for individuals, families, small groups, and churches
- Secure online journaling or keep using print for privacy
- A place to grow your faith alongside believers worldwide

#### **Bonus for You:**

Download exclusive study bundles and resources when you create a <u>free HolyJot account</u>. No spam. No gimmicks. Just God's Word.

#### Visit Now:

- \* www.HolyJot.com
- Scan this QR code to start your next Bible Study today:

We'd love to hear your story. Email us at <a href="mailto:info@holyjot.com">info@holyjot.com</a>.



Connect with us at:

Facebook • Instagram • YouTube • TikTok

You are welcome to share this PDF with others. ase keep it intact so the full study and credits remain.

© 2025 HolyJot LLC. All Rights Reserved.